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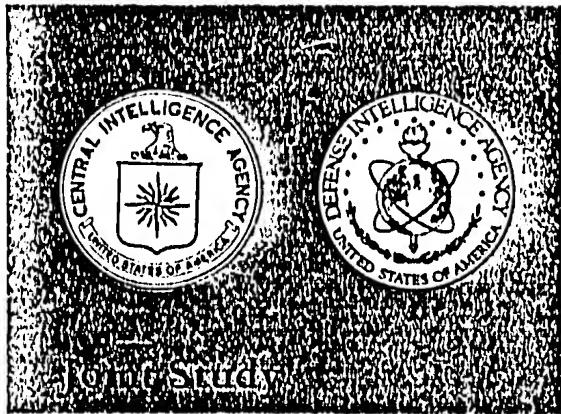
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Weekly Survey of Communist Military Developments in Indochina

DIA review(s) completed.

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15 May 1974

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Sixty-Third Report

WEEKLY SURVEY OF COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA*

(This report covers the period May 8-14, 1974)

The Key Points

- ARVN has increased the rotation of its forces from MR 1 to Saigon which gives the South Vietnamese a brigade of the strategic reserve in the Saigon area for the first time since mid-1972.

* This report has been prepared jointly by the Central Intelligence Agency and the Department of Defense.

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II. Significant Communist Combat Activity

13. Combat activity in South Vietnam last week declined to one of the lowest weekly levels this year with Communist-initiated violations decreasing from a daily average of 85 to 66. Casualties also dropped sharply with Communist battle deaths down to 84 daily from 148 the previous week and ARVN losses decreasing from 28 daily to 18. Activity in all military regions was at a low level, although MR 4 continued to register the most incidents and combat losses. This lull in combat is not expected to continue, however, especially in the southern half of South Vietnam, where COSVN reportedly has ordered main-force units to conduct offensive operations during May and June designed to kill large numbers of government troops, disrupt ARVN pacification efforts, and gain psychological victories in the political struggle.

III. Other Developments Affecting Communist Military Capabilities in North Vietnam

Rotation of ARVN Combat Forces

14. On April 25, the South Vietnamese Joint General Staff decided that beginning in May a brigade (about 2,500 men) from either the Marine or Airborne Division would move by sea each month from South Vietnam's northern MR 1 to Saigon. This is the first time since mid-1972 that a brigade of the strategic reserve has been stationed in the Saigon area. In this capacity, it will serve as an emergency reserve force. Since mid-1973, only a battalion from each of the divisions had been rotating to Saigon monthly. Since MR 3 was the original operating area for both divisions prior to the 1972 offensive, brigade personnel will be given extended rest and leave with relatives and friends which should significantly increase unit morale.

15. This partial drawdown of South Vietnamese combat forces from such a highly sensitive area has been made possible by the overall reduction of Communist infantry forces in Quang Tri Province since the cease-fire and the fact that NVA main force units there have been replaced by local forces in front-line positions. The MR 1 commander has designated a regiment from the First ARVN Infantry Division to be the reserve force for the northern provinces in the absence of the Marine or Airborne Brigade.

Communist Construction Activity Continues

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16. [redacted] road construction on Communist Route 14 in Kontum Province is continuing, as some six miles have been completed since late March. The remaining gap of 8-10 miles in the western highlands supply route could be completed by early June. With the NVA's current capability to shift vehicle traffic from the logistic route in southern Laos to the western highlands supply route, this new segment, if properly maintained, will facilitate truck movement through South Vietnam's MRs 1 and 2 through the latter part of the rainy season.

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